

THE 7  
REASONABLENESS  
OF  
ORTHODOX and ARIAN  
BELIEVING

Consider'd and Compar'd:

Design'd as an

APPENDIX

TO

*Arianism Confuted without Dis-  
puting, &c.*

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—*Eripe flammis;  
Si quid adhuc superest, & rerum consule  
summæ.*

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THE  
 REASONABLENESS  
 OF  
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THE religious Pests that used to infest particular Christian Churches single; and one only of which has been thought enough heretofore to make a Nation or an Age sufficiently scandalous, and to send it down in ecclesiastical Story stigmatized with it to Posterity, seem to have pour'd themselves in all at once upon our  
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unhappy Age and Island. What considerable *heterodoxy* or *heteropraxy* is there more now wanting amongst us, to fill up the measure of the ill State of Christianity? to compleat the Character of our irreligious Infamy? to make our Kingdom the most finished Piece of all ecclesiastical Irregularities and Deformity, that ever yet pretended to retain the Christian Name publickly unrenounced? What one Article of our Christian Faith, or what other considerable Point of Doctrine, has not had its profest Adversaries? What part of Church Discipline and Polity stands without open Contradiction to it? Look thro' the thirty nine Articles, the Badges of our Unanimity, and we'll scarce find one but has its particular Adversaries by Profession marked out: Look over the Body of our established Polity, Discipline, and publick Worship, the Test of our Christian Spirit of Uniformity, and there is hardly one Circumstance so unexceptionable, either great or little, that the Spirit of Schism has not fasten'd itself particularly upon, as an unlawful Term of Communion, to add to the Reasonableness of ecclesiastical Separation. Our Church-Officers, from an Archbishop to an Apparitor, have one by one been *quære'd* and protested against. Scrupulous Conscience has stript the Clergy, together with their Tithes and Maintenance, of all their outward Habit; and from the Mitre, Rose Hatband and Lawn Sleeves, down to the nicknamed Surcingle, and so to the momentous Difference of primitive Shoe-strings, or more modern Buckles, has found them not to bear the Gospel touch. Not only the Liturgick Form as well

well as Matter of our publick Worship, but each minute Ceremony, to the Nod of a Head or the bend of a Knee, has wanted its solemn Vindication; and the very Points of the Compass have been turn'd to Points of Conscience to make our Schisms the more ridiculously sinful. The very uniform Situation of our Churches, the turn of our Faces, nay the lying in our Graves, and all easterly Inclination, as the effect of popish Magnetisme, are amongst the laudable Grounds of Nonconformity.

But from Opposition to Particulars, as little and slow Work, Men are now to come to a general Assault openly, not upon particular Articles of Faith but upon whole Creeds; whether Episcopacy or Presbytery is now no longer the Dispute, but whether a Ministry or no Ministry; this and t'other Ceremony is not what we now are put to contend for, but whether together with all ecclesiastical Polity, all establish'd Religion is not to go to wrack. Whilst Arianism at the same time, invited over, like a fatal Cancer fix'd upon the vital Substance of Christianity, is eating its way amongst the Members of our Body; and this not any longer as formerly, by stealth, but with open Face, as a Child of the Day, provoking and bidding Defiance to the Catholick Faith constituted, and all its *Defenders*; setting up for itself distinct Houses of publick Worship, no fewer than three professedly such, within the compass of one Branch of the single County of *Devon* only, that my self *en passant* met withal; a thing altogether new and unknown before to this part of the Christian

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World, and reserved as a Monster for *British* Toleration to be the Mother and Nurse to; boasting its Growth, and Strength, and Progress; more than whispering that one of our learned Seminaries is growing as by Consignation to become entirely its own; besides its less known Interests in others; nor sticking at pointing to its Well wishers in Lawn and Ermin, nor even at pretending to poll Mitres with the Orthodox. But I hope there is more Policy than Truth in those their scandalous Insinuations, since 'tis no new thing for Men to credit their Cause by claiming great Names as its Favourers. However with no small Glory it sees its Champions, as well mad as demure, prosecuted with Reverence like *Turkish* Santons, as well as with more solid Recompences; whilst the learned Labours and honest Zeal of the Orthodox for the Vitals of their Faith, comes well off if it is but neglected, or paid with a cool and empty Complement, and not frown'd upon or quell'd as intemperate Heat; or is with a suspicious over-tenderness, and an excess of ill looked Charity staved off from falling too heavily upon the Heads of these *good Men* Hereticks. And he that is presumed to be the first Director of this whole new *Arian* Monument, sits warmly nested on high, close under the Throne of *Constantine* himself, as unespied or in Sanctuary.

Cunning Workmen on both sides have hammer'd all the controverted Texts into all the Forms that humane Art and Tools can give them, to turn their Aspects favourably to their Doctrines; and all the black as well as white Arts of



of Forge-Work have been tryed and practised upon them. And the little Success which has followed the manifest Advantages of Orthodox Pens over this subtle Adversary, (as I have observed in my *Arianism confuted without Dispute, &c.*) has convinc'd me, that downright contesting the mighty Point itself only, is not the happy and effectual way of dealing with it. If clear and solid Refutations by dispute would have done the Business, it had been done at first, when they were also backed with the Authority of a Catholick Condemnation of it, by the Christian World representatively convened, and by their making the Abnegation of it a positive part of the solemn Profession of our Christian Faith. But since that did not do, I despair, I confess, after that Experiment made, of its being bore down by private Conflict. And the broken, as well civil as religious Posture of the Christian World, make Appeals to future General Councils as chimerical, as the Hopes of them are vain. And could truly such again be had, they could not give a more full and authoritative Decision in this Case than what has been already given by the Council of *Nice*.

The Guardianship of the Christian Faith therefore is now devolved to national and particular Churches, each for themselves by their Bishops, together with their Supreme the Faith's Defender, to maintain Christian Truth, sufficiently determin'd and confirm'd, as well by honest Laws and worthy Sanctions fencing it round, which are the surest Testimonies of their Christian Heartiness and Faith's Sincerity, as by free-

ing the original Spirit of divine Revelation from Impediment of Translation, by changing the originally revealed Names and Notices of God, from standing as Neuters and Indifferents in their own Cause, or indeed from having Translations prejudicial to Orthodoxy, to speak correspondently to their native Force, and to the renew'd Proposition of themselves under the Gospel. We are indeed Masters of our own Cause, and have it in our own Hands to let the Word of God confound Arianism without our Disputings; which, why it should not be done, unless publick Reasons are offer'd to the contrary, as I cannot foresee; so I must own my self tempted to fear, that the Infection has struck deeper amongst us than I am willing to say, lest *the whole Head is sick, and the whole Heart faint*; I mean, lest some of our principal ecclesiastical Members are indeed something of the Men that our *Arians* give them out to be; that we are not in good earnest for the Vitals of our Christianity, our Saviour's Divinity and the holy Trinity, but are either whifling and temporizing Formalists, that matter not what Faith rides uppermost, so long as we are but so our selves; or Hypocrites, orthodox in show, but in *Arian* Interests at bottom.

And as it is not by the bare dint of Argument and Refutation of their Doctrines and Principles, that Heresies are to be bore down; so neither is it on their side, by directly imposing those their Doctrines by false Reasonings only, and insisting on the Merits of their Truth, that they pretend to propagate themselves, but by well setting off

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of themselves to Advantage by some popular Arts and recommendatory Circumstances, that they make choice of to go along with their Doctrines, as Sweetners and Promoters in their Propagation. These serve as Oil to make the Wheels of their heretical Movement go the glibber, and with them they work their Hypotheses. Besides such as are common to all, each Heresy has something of this kind peculiar to itself, which it adopts and appropriates to itself, as most agreeable to its Spirit and *Genius*. These popular Emissaries and heretical Procurers go before their Doctrines, and prepare the way for their Introduction; they soften Mens Judgments, and possess their Minds and Affections favourably towards them, and predispose future Profelytes not only for a fair but partial Hearing, and lay the other side of the Question under Prejudice and Inequality of Inclination; so that the Business is as good as done with the Judge before the Tryal comes to a hearing. Of the popular and recommendatory Arts common to all Arch-hereticks and Heresies, high Pretences to Sanctity, and Appearances of strict Morality and precise Regularity of Life, is noted to be the chief; take but from false Doctors and Doctrines the Service and Advantage of these their Introducers, and so far undeceive Men as to bring them to these on equal Terms with Truth and regular Profession, and you disable and disarm them more effectually, than if you never so solidly confuted their Doctrines, if these are left but to them entire. By the help of these we see, how amongst our selves the most paul-



try and defenceless Set of Doctrines and Errors make a shift to pick up a Succession of Profelytes in Opposition to the most manifest Truths of Christianity, and the most unexceptionable parts of the Constitution of it. Quakerism, for Instance, by the only Affectation of a singular Plainness, and the shew of uncommon and imaginarily primitive Simplicity, finds weak Persons enough to keep up the Numbers of the Professors of its fond and confused Opinions. The Presbyterians, with our other fanatical Sectaries, owe their Support more to a Set of outward Formalities, and to a Tone and Cant of Devotion, than to their Vindications, which of themselves are contemptible, but do well enough to serve under these; for few of the lower World, that are catch'd by the Ear and not by the Eye, have farther Argument for their Conversion than the musical Charm of having their Ears struck upon in this so powerful religious Key. And Popery above all others, besides a thousand higher Arts and lower Amusements played over, by which it ensnares and retains in the Profession of its Superstitions, more eminently insists also upon that common one, the great Devotion, the strict Discipline and austere Lives of her Monks and Regulars beyond what Protestantism had to shew. I wish this thread-bare Cloak we so plainly see thro' when worn by Popery, we would be as well aware of amongst our selves; and not let Vogues of strict living, and monkish fiddle faddles of Preciseness, industriously blown abroad of the Authors, win us the more to a Reconcilement to their *Arian* Errors, whose

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more peculiar Engine and popular Artifice to insinuate itself withal, is the Usurpation of the powerful Word *Reason*, with whose mighty Sound trumpeted before them, as if it were all and only theirs, both *Arians*, and all our modern Antitrinitarian Hereticks make their way to Profelytes; this they cry up and magnify, and appeal to, as altogether on their side, and would be thought to contend only for this, to have Christian Belief regulated by Reason; of whose sacred Laws and Rights they set up for Asserters, and pretend to pay the greatest Deference to them; to have Right done to Reason is the Foundation of their Controversy, their first Principle and Ground of Objection to the Catholick Faith; embracing which they represent as fond Credulity, and as believing on unmanly Terms, amounting to no less than renouncing a Man's *Reason*, and offering the greatest Violence to *human Understanding*, crying out against its Propositions not so much because they are contrary to Scripture, where they cannot deny them to have at least fair and plausible Grounds, but because they are contrary to their Reason; and therefore contrary to Scripture because contrary to their *Reason*, which they study not to reconcile to Scripture, but Scripture to that. Upon this Presumption of Inconsistency, with this Reason of theirs, they load the mysteries of our Christian Faith with opprobrious Names, of being barbarous and unintelligible Jargon; pronouncing whatever is incomprehensible to be at the same time incredible; exploding whatever is beyond every Man's Conception, as the Imposition

position of Folly; and equalling the Doctrine of the Trinity with Transubstantiation, as the same sort of Absurdities; whilst more sly and artful Dealers, who are really the Setters on that put their warm and less considerate Tools upon giving this foul and blasphemous Treatment to the Propositions of the Catholick Faith, and on whom it is chargeable, pretending to write more in the Spirit of *Meekness* and *Candour*, than abstain from the gross Terms of these scandalous Imputations, only to throw the Reproaches of them with the greater Severity; for who may not see that the learned Author of the *Scripture Doctrine of the Trinity*, in his *Introduction*, (where he keeps such ado about Mens doing for themselves, when they have Occasion, what nobody else can do for them) does not fetch over and over again so often *Mens Understanding*, &c. and toss it and tumble it about as he does under so many various Forms of Expression, out of good Nature or good Manners, or Respect to orthodox Reputation, intended to be affected by it, but to heighten the Reflection by its needing no Application; as if the bare naming the Use, Duty, and Necessity of Mens making use of their Reason and Understandings in Religion, were a wipe given to Catholicks; so that when he says, *For the right apprehending of which Doctrine, Men are sincerely to make use of their best Understanding*—*The only Rule of Faith to every Christian is the Doctrine of Christ—as apply'd to him or his own Understanding*—*imposed things harder to understand than the Scripture itself*—the more  
unintelligible

unintelligible their Definitions grew, to affect Mens Understandings — Veneration of Mysteries lies not in receiving blindly the Words of God without understanding them — affecting to speak unintelligibly — contend, Men must never use their own Understanding, &c. Harping so often upon one String; had he put to each of these a sound Rub for the Orthodox, a Bob for the Council of Nice, the Athanasian for that, how do the Catholicks like that with a Tost? a Jerk for every body knows who, &c. truly I think there would have been more of the Spirit of Candour in it, and it would have looked with as much of the Spirit of Meekness in it as it does now.

It ought considerably to blunt the Points of this sort of satyrical Reflections cast upon the establish'd Explications, and ecclesiastical Definitions of the Christian Faith, and assent to them upon the account of their not falling in with the natural Notions of the Mind, and its Taste of Things, that it is the old Story kept up, and the very same Objection that was made to the first simple Proposition of it, and its original *Κηρύγμα* or Promulgation by preaching; when they had no human Definitions to complain of, yet even then when it was propounded as simply and plainly as plain could be; for all that, *Christ*, or the *Christian Doctrine*, was still to the Greeks Foolishness — who sought after Wisdom, 1 Cor. i. and who had wisdom'd it so far, and long, that they knew not God. The Greeks were the philosophical People, and Men of Reason of those Times, that cast the same  
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dirty reflections upon the Faith, and talked and thought then, when *Christ's* Divinity, and the Form of Baptism explain'd by inspired Men, was only propounded to them, just as the *Arians* and Anti-Trinitarians do now against the Terms of its fuller Explication in our Creeds, calling it a pack of Folly, and *unintelligible* Nonsense, and demanding the same Satisfaction to their Understandings. Whence we see that the Offence does not lie in the *Athanasian* or *Nicene* Creeds, but in the Root it self, since the objection was the same before those Editions or their Terms of Explication were established to lay the blame upon; which, if they were all, one by one, withdrawn, would be found still to run home to the simple Principle where it first begun, and shewed it self. And 'tis well humane Definitions are in the way, and come in between, to take of the charge of Foolishness; or it would still fall, as it did at first upon *the Wisdom of God* it self.

My present Design is to detect the Vanity of this *Arian* high pretence to Reason, and of their confident charge of Violence and Wrong offer'd to the Rights of humane Understanding by the Orthodox, and to enquire what grounds there are for these Prejudices either way, that it may appear whether are *the more reasonable Believers*; and whose way of acting and form of proceeding is more truly logical and regularly philosophical; and whether embracing the Catholick Faith under its most obnoxious Terms of Proposition, has not more natural Wisdom in it, than beleiving on those Terms and Conditions



tions they cry up so much, and contend for.

This *Arian* Charge upon the orthodox Belief of the Doctrine of the Trinity, and its propositions in our Creeds, *viz.* that it is not agreeable to Reason, and too much neglects Understanding; is laid so deep in Fallacy and Equivocation in all the Terms, that for the greater *Odium* sake, they have chosen to express it by; and we must so shuffle and dodge with the double meanings of the Terms, *Believing, Reason, Understanding* before we can bring them to bear against us, that did we not know what they would be at, it would be hard to make it out to be a pertinent Charge, because each Term must, and must not, signify the same thing. They give them out in one Sense, and yet presume upon Men's catching them up and running away with them in another more common; and yet they must stand in that first Sense too, or else all is spoil'd.

How pertinently, as well as fairly and rightly, the Words, *Believing, Reason, Understanding*, are used to make up a Charge with them upon us, the Reader may be sensible from what follows.

First, for the Word *Believing*, as it here signifies the act of the Mind exercised upon the mode of the divine Being, its Object; that is the Subject that they charge the want of *Reason* and due measure of *Understanding* upon. It is an assent given to the mode of the divine Being propounded to it; now because there are not only several sorts of Assents, but more sorts than one, that pass by the name of believing; which of these it is which they ought to mean,  
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when they charge it with want of Reason, as given by the Orthodox to the Doctrine of the Trinity, as propounded in the Creeds, the common Doctrine of the Assents of the Mind, as it is settled by the Observations of the Philosophical, and so far as I know, stands on all sides allowed and agreed to, does shew; and the known Practice and Profession of the Orthodox; for they ought to mean by it such kind of Assent as they very well know that the Orthodox own and stick to: For otherwise, if they charge one sort of Assent, as *Believing*, with being not reasonable, which the Orthodox reject and deny to be truly and properly so in this case; and when it is notorious they use another, and not that, the Charge drops as impertinent. If they say, that tho' they do not charge the act of *believing* the *Athanasian* Propositions, &c. in that sense and notion of it which the Orthodox do own as theirs, yet they do in the true and right Sense that it ought to be taken in. Yet still admitting this to be so, 'tis begging the question as to the Orthodox; and the charge of Folly, tho' it light upon the Act, yet cannot upon the Orthodox, till it is first proved that it is and ought to be theirs; which the pinning of Folly to it is but an odd kind of inducement to persuade them into. You ought to *believe* so and so, and then you are a Fool, is a coarse kind of Rhetorick; but as this kind of Assent which they would have to be the orthodox Form of believing is indeed their own, so they must be forced to take it with all the Irrationalities which they contend for being in it.

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The Substance of the allowed Doctrine of the Minds Assents is, that there are two distinct Foundations that the Assents of the Mind rest upon and arise from; one they call *Evidence* in a restrain'd Sense, as the term of Art appropriate to this Doctrine; the other is *Testimony* or *Authority*.

An Assent upon Evidence is when the Mind is moved by the Object it self; proceeds upon its own Informations, and the domestick Inquisitions of its own Faculties; that have either an immediate correspondence with the Object that is it self present to them; or there is some necessary connexion that is equivalent to its Presence and to immediate Intuition. When the Mind does not go abroad to call in the assistance of foreign Intelligence concerning the thing propounded, but trusts wholly to its own Notices. Assents this way produced in distinction from those that stand on the other Foundation, are called *Knowledge*, distinguished by different Names, according to the degrees of strength and certainty in the *Evidence*.

An Assent upon *Testimony* and its *Authority*, is when the Mind not having sufficient Notices of its own at home to ground Assent to what is propounded to it upon; has its Advices of it from abroad, and not from the Communication that its Faculties or Officers of Intelligence have with it; and depends upon the Account and Report made to it by another; that intermediately hands the Information to it. An Assent on this Foundation, by way of distinction from those that stand upon the other, is called *Believing*, or an act of *Faith*. This



This being the known and proper Name, Notion, Nature, and Definition of *believing*; nay, this being what the Orthodox themselves declare to be their Form of *believing*, one would think that when the *Arians* charge the Orthodox with Irrationality in *believing* the Propositions of the Doctrine of the Trinity, that in fair meaning they should design by *believing* their giving their Assent to it upon *Testimony* and the Foundation of *Authority*; but this Notion of it they drop, and carry us off into another more useful to them, and more consistent with the Spirit of their Heresy; a mix'd and compounded Assent, that improperly and figuratively bears the Name, tho' it is not simply such, nor all of that Nature.

For as in this our State of Imperfection at best we do but know in part, and the Foundation of *Evidence* is seldom so compleat, but it wants some *Faith* of the Foundation of something of *Authority* and *Testimony* to help it out, on which in part the Assent rests; and we hardly know any thing so perfectly but it has something inevident in it, which *Authority* and *Testimony* is forc'd to fill up; so on the other Hand the Foundation of *Authority* is never so complete, but it has some of the Foundation of *Knowledge* in conjunction with it; and the Mind's Assents to it are given to it in concurrence with some of its own *Evidences*: So that but very few of our Assents to the Propositions of natural things are Acts of simple *Knowledge* without some of the Foundation of *Faith* in them; and fewer or none Acts of mere and simple *Belief*; but are  
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of a mixt nature, made up partly of *Knowledge*, from *Evidences* and Notices of the Mind's own, and partly of *Faith*; and bear the Name of *knowing*, or *believing*, as *Evidence* or *Testimony* is the predominant Part of their Foundation. This mixt Form of Assent, arising from the compounded Foundation of *Evidence* and *Testimony*, is the presumptive Belief of the the Mode of the Divine Being, which is charged with want of Reason in the Orthodox; and were it of that Nature, it justly would merit the Imputation, as by being the *Arians* it will be found to do: for it shall be by taking them at their Words, and confirming their Charge of Unreasonableness upon this mixt Form of Assent, which they mean by *believing*, when the Mode of the divine Being is the Object propounded, that shall be the Evidence by which I propose to try the Issue of the Reasonableness of our different Believings, that is the Cause in hand; by shewing not only the conditionate, but the absolute Impropriety of such mixt Mode of assenting to any Propositions of the Mode of the divine Being, which is an Object of that Nature that admits of no Composition in the Foundation of our Assents to it, but must be *Testimony* only, and *Authority* or nothing: and consequently, the Assents themselves raised upon it, must be Acts of simple Belief in its strictest Sense and Notion; and all admission of other Ingredients into its Foundation, will be found to make Assents to it, Acts of such incurable Irregularity, that tho' the *materia cre-  
dita*, the Matter assented to, prove true, yet,

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on the Minds part, the Act is both sinful and absurd ; not standing on that Foundation which the nature of the Object requires , and the quality of the Testimony and Authority (being a perfect and compleat Foundation of Assent) makes it duty to rest only upon. And here it is where *Arianism* should be first put to vindicate itself, before we proceed to dispute with them the logical truth of the Propositions to be assented to, and the meaning of the Terms of divine Revelation. Let them first clear the Propriety of the Foundation of their assent to them ; and shew with what Propriety they compound it as they do, with the Evidences of Knowledge ; and make Conformity to those their Evidences of Knowledge, the Rule they expound the Propositions relating to the divine Being by ; and the ground of Objection to any Definitions of it so far as they do : as will appear by what they mean by their mighty Word *Reason*, which we are now next to consider ; and then I shall go on and examine the State of our different modes of Assent, and shew whether is the more proper and reasonable believing.

And first, let us see what they ought to mean by the Word *Reason*, the want of which in our Faith they so much upbraid us withal, and boast so much of in theirs ; and then what they do mean by it, by *Reason*, as apply'd to the Act of Faith or believing. It is plain that they ought to mean, that Belief is an Act of true Judgment, and natural Wisdom ; and that the Assent so called, is the effect of just Ratiocination, produced not only by sufficient, but  
also



also by right Motives; but now, instead of thus intending by *Reason*, either *Reason* absolute, or *Reason* appropriate, as it signifies the right Law of acting in that Case; or believing upon good Cause, and a proper Foundation; they mean by it themselves, only a certain sort of Motives, and some common Evidences of the Mind, relating to Assents of *Knowledge*, that are opposed to *Testimony* or *Authority*; and to require which in simple Acts of Belief, is contradiction in Terms; being the very thing that so far destroys both the natural and moral Virtue of *believing*, as it is admitted into it; but impose upon others this *dictum secundum quid*, for the *dictum simpliciter*, for Reason in its absolute State.

The ground of this equivocal Sense of the Word *Reason*, and of our natural Notices of Things and Evidences of Knowledge passing under that Name, is, because Assent upon *Evidence* is the Mind's first and native method of embracing Truth; to which *believing* or assenting upon *Testimony* and *Authority* is but secondary, subsidiary and supplemental, to be had recourse to, there only, when the first fails, and no further than it fails; unless positive Precept, the Laws of Charity, and duty to natural or civil Superiors, suspend the Obligation: it not being a Method of Choice, but of Necessity; when the Object propounded, either thro' distance of Time or Place, falls not under immediate Notices; or thro' natural Defect or Privation in the Organs and Instruments of Apprehension, the Conveyances of Evidences are impracticable;

practicable ; or the Object, by its secret, subtle, or superior nature, is beyond the Investigations of the Faculties, and so inaccessible, or incomprehensible, or both, that the Faculties cannot fix any Notes or Observations upon it, to make report from to the Mind, sufficient to raise an Assent upon ; nor penetrate so far as to make any Discovery whether or no it agrees with the Proposition of it.

*Authority* being thus a force put upon the Mind, which it therefore less affects, as reflecting upon its self-sufficiency ; and its own Evidence being its genuine and darling Foundation to assent upon ; which it therefore more loves, as all Things are fondest of themselves and of their own ; and because that within the Bounds of Nature, and the things amongst which the Minds common Practice of Assent lies, and the Beings to which its Evidences relate, as their proper Objects ; there is no such thing (as I have already observed) as *simple Belief*, upon the mere Foundation of *Authority* only, nor indeed ought to be : but the Mind's Evidences are still admitted as a supposed part of the Foundation of assenting to whatever is propounded ; and is also the ruling part, to which the part of *Testimony*, however great and strong, is so far subordinate, that the justification of Assent to what it propounds, is its being agreeable to the part of Evidence ; or, at least, not being inconsistent with it. Hence it has come to pass, that because without some of these, the Mind's own Evidences of Knowledge, Assents ought not regularly to be given to the natural Objects they  
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relate to, that this their considerable Interest and Part in Assents, is complemented by Custom, with the Name of *Reason* in them, in distinction to the less favour'd Motive of *Authority*. Nay, even tho' that *Authority*, from which by that Name they are contradistinguished, be *divine Authority*, they still no less properly bear away the Name of *Reason* and *Rational*; a Demonstration that it is in this Case only a Word of Art, and not denoting any greater Virtue or Excellency in the Motive of Evidence absolutely beyond Authority; for then would it be blasphemy to oppose it to divine Authority, or to say that *divine Authority* is not *Reason*, or reasonable to be assented upon.

This technical Sense of the Word *Reason*, either ignorantly passing with themselves for Reason absolute, by hanging so much in their Eyes; or artfully thrown out to pass for Reason absolute; the heavy Charge upon Orthodox believing is for wanting this; and what they so much glory in having in their Faith. And the want of it is indeed a Charge upon such Assents, either of Knowledge, or mixt Belief, of which it is the proper Foundation, if the nature of the Object require Assents of that kind; but to charge the Absence of *such Reason*, viz. natural Notices or Evidence, as a Vice and Defect in Acts of simple Belief, is as ridiculous as applying Objects to the wrong Organ; to ground Assents to Sounds upon the Eye, and to Colours upon the Ear; and requiring such Motives as the Objects cannot yield, the apprehen-



five Faculties were not made to receive, and which by supposition are first excluded.

At the same fair rate they use us in the Word *Understanding*, that they are so often up with, and give such strict Charges to be sure not to believe without, as you have heard before. For who would not think but this *Understanding* were something essential to an Act of Faith, and were absolutely necessary in believing the Doctrine of the Trinity, especially, to perfect it; for such 'tis plain, they would have Men take it for; which the World is to suppose the Orthodox shamefully want in their Faith, and that they do not let their Faculty of Understanding do its Office, nor bear the Part it ought to have in their Acts of Faith; which they (the *Arians*) take more care to see done in theirs. But we shall find this wonderful Ingredient, as they mean it, is far from answering this Character; all the *Understanding* that is absolutely necessary in order to *believe*, and as previous to it, is the simple Perception of what is propounded, or the literal and grammatical Apprehension of the meaning of the Terms, abstracted from any thing that is logical or syllogistical employ'd upon them; so much knowledge of them as is necessary to make them a naked Proposition, without either Argument or Conclusion, standing in a perfect State of Indifference, as to Truth and Falshood. For Authority being the supposed Argument to enforce their determination to truth, so far as the Mind puts in any of its own Evidences or Logick before hand, to help to determine them that way,

so much it derogates from the Credit and Sufficiency of the Authority, and takes off from the Virtue and Perfection of its Act of Faith; and if it not only puts in such its own Notices, but for their sakes, the better approves the Propositions; and therefore secretly first assents to them, or is disposed by them, wholly or in part, so to do; they may colour such Assent with the Name of Faith, but it is not so: for the Work is done by the Mind within itself, before it comes to believing; and the Conclusion that we call Faith, is already drawn a different way. For instance, if I say that a Man ought not to believe such a Triangle to be equiangular, or equilateral, unless he first understand it, by understanding I ought not to mean, his working it by Demonstration, and feeling the force of that, for he would not believe it a bit, unless he did so before it came to that, but would know it; and would abuse the Person upon whose Testimony he should then pretend to assent to it. The Understanding therefore that Dr. *Clark* (suppose) so much presses the great Duty and Necessity of, in order to the right Belief of divine Revelation, and more especially of the Propositions of the Scripture Doctrine of the Trinity; ought not to mean the Mind's Approbations of those Propositions upon its own Evidences, nor the putting Assents to them in whole, or in part, upon the scientifick Foundation; but the bare Apprehension only of the meaning of the Words offer'd, and what the Proposer would have by them, without any private Moments of the Mind's dislike, determining

mining it against, or in favour of one Acceptation more than another. But this is not the *Understanding* that will content him, and that he so plies us with the Inculcations of the necessity of; by which he neither means apprehending the grammatical Force and Power of the Words, in their propositional State, nor yet their true and right Meaning; but the logical Truth or Agreement, with the Things they denote, or such understanding of them, as the Mind, upon its own antecedent Notices of things, best likes, and can best reconcile the *Idea's* of to such its common Principles, as it sets up for Guides in their Acceptation; and the suitableness of the *Idea's* convey'd from them, to certain other *Idea's* of natural things that it has before fixed as Standards, that it resolves not to depart from, or assent against. Nor by *Understanding* does he intend the first Perception of the Power of the Names,\* but such intimate penetration of the things, and so much vision of the truth of their State, and the causes of that Truth, as discursively, and by ratiocination at least, if not immediately, discovers, that they are, or may be, as propounded to it.

If by *understanding* the Propositions of the Doctrine of the Trinity, they only intended assenting to them, under some meaning, they need not be so much in pain for that, because 'tis not possible to do otherwise, since 'tis Sense and Meaning that makes them an Object of Assent; and it is as impertinent to charge Men not to assent till they so understand, as it would be to bid Men be sure not to see until they had something



something to look at ; or when they know, always to know something ; since assenting to no meaning, like knowing nothing, is not assenting or believing at all. That grammatical Ignorance and Insensibility by non-apprehension of the Force of Terms, is not the want of that *Understanding* that our Belief of the Propositions of the Doctrine of the Trinity is charged withal, is acknowledged by the learned Authors aforesaid, where he talks of *intelligible meaning* (Introduction) and implies the Logical to be added to the Grammatical, to amount to what he calls *Understanding* in this Case ; and that it is the construction of Things, not of Words, that he requires by the Word *Understanding*.

Nor is it the true Meaning and grammatical Force only of the Terms, that he designs by *Understanding*. For were it so, the Dispute would be wholly Grammatical, and nothing but Dictionary Work ; but this is past over, and 'tis taken as granted, that the Orthodox know what they mean by what they say, and we are presently had away off from Grammatical Understanding, into the Mazes of Logick and Metaphysicks, to have our Minds there illustrated, with the Understanding that he preaches up as necessary to the most simple and ideotick Christians, with Distinctions of *specifick* and *individual Substance*, instead of Grace, to expel the Grammatical Ignorance of Christ as a divine Person being of one substance with the Father : In short, by the Word *Understanding*, they do not only mean the natural Evidences of  
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the Mind (as they did by Reason) made the Foundation of Assent; but farther still, the Assent itself, perfected and given, upon that Foundation, in exclusion to all Regards to Testimony; and leaving no room for Faith, but as a superfluous Post-Act, to stand for Name and Fashion-sake, upon that Assent of Knowledge, if at all; for that poor old-fashion'd Name and thing, as out of date, and laid aside, is hardly vouchsafed Name or Notice, unless to blast its Reputation thro' the whole Scripture Doctrine of the Trinity, the Subject where, and where alone, it ought to triumph in Simplicity. We hear, indeed, of the Rule of Faith, the *materia credenda*, but to what Purpose? or what Use to be put to? to be believed? No, we hear nothing of that, but to *be apply'd by the Understanding; to affect the Understanding, &c.* And whereas hitherto the Doubt amongst Divines has been, whether *Knowledge* can consist with *Faith* in the Mind, at the same Time, concerning the same Proposition; and whether the Inevidence of the thing *believed* be not essential to it, under the plausible Name of *Reason* and *Understanding*, our modish Believers have tript up the Heels of Faith, and put pretended Knowledge upon us in its stead. *Knowing* is *believing*, and Evidence the Authority of Testimony; and as if we were over-run with Faith, and the Son of Man were like to find the Earth over-grown with the rank Increase of this less Grain than that of Mustard Seed, his laborious Business is now to keep it down, to tear up its very Roots and Foundation, to raise Difficulties  
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and Bugbears against it ; for what else is the end of our *Introductions* and *Scripture-Doctrines*, but Nature's Plea for Infidelity, or a new way of assenting to Christianity without believing it ? A Dissuasive from *walking by Faith, and not by Sight*, where Men have no Eyes ; making *Faith the Evidence of things seen*. Dear Christians, don't believe too fast, is the end of all the notable Logick and Rhetorick.

This mighty Charge therefore against the Orthodox, as *believing without reason, understanding things unintelligible, &c.* that looks so terrible, at the bottom comes to nothing more than this, that our Assent to the Doctrine of the Trinity, is an Act of simple Faith, without any mixture of Evidence in its foundation ; the doing of which, whether it is right or wrong, and more proper and reasonable than the mixt Form of Faith they so much insist upon, we are now to consider.

The Reasonableness or Unreasonableness of the Simplicity of Belief, and assenting to things upon the unmixt foundation of Testimony only, does not depend upon the Quality of the Testimony, but upon the Nature of the Object, or thing assented to ; what antecedent Notices the Mind has of it, and how far it relates to its Senses or Faculties, its Instruments and Offices of Information and Apprehension, as their proper Object : For if we have antecedent Notices of the thing proposed to be assented to, tho' the Testimony of the Proposer be divine and infallible, and the Foundation of Assent is on that part complete, and the Mind has no right to question  
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the truth of what it propounds ; yet still it has a Right of Construction, where the Terms of the Testimony are dubious, in favour of its own Evidences, and of taking them in that Sense, as may best comply, or bear least hard upon its own Notions and *Idea's* ; becaule those its Evidences are the Laws and Rules given out to the Mind before, by the same infallible Proposer, to measure Truth by, and to ground Assents in concurrence with upon ; which within their proper compass, so far as they are not positively retracted or contradicted by the Proposer himself, stand good.

But if the Nature of the thing proposed be such, that the Mind has no antecedent Notices of it, and none of its Senses or Faculties have any relation to it as their Object, but it is utterly without all its Evidences, and all its Collection of *Idea's* are foreign to it ; in such case, tho' the Testimony should be only humane, yet the Assent must be an Act of simple Belief, or none at all ; or if the original Testimony of such matter proposed, that the Mind knows nothing of it self, be divine, and it be repropoed to it under humane Definitions, the apparency of Truth in those Definitions, by consistency with the Mind's Evidences of things, which is the *Reason* and *Understanding* that the *Arians* talk of, are out of the question, as any part of the Foundation to assent upon, and of no weight either as to Motive or Objection ; but the Authority of such Reproproers, is all that the Mind has to proceed to assent upon.

The Fallacy or Fallibility of Testimony propounding things that fall under the Mind's common Notices (which it calls its natural Principles) and which are the proper Objects of its Informations, is the ground of mixed Assents; the Wisdom or Reasonableness of which lies in justly balancing and weighing the Validity of the *Testimony* against its own *Evidences*, which is the Rule of Credibility; and according to its Consistency or Inconsistency with those Evidences, proportioning the Degrees of its Assents to what is testified; and putting upon its Propositions the Notes of *Certainty*, *Probability*, *Possibility*, and *Impossibility*; and answerably to those Characters, assenting firmly, faintly, suspending its Assent, where it cannot reconcile the Propositions of Testimony, with its Evidences concerning the thing testified; and flatly denying it, if it stand against them; for no weight of Authority can balance contradiction to them.

To apply now this Doctrine to the matter in hand, in order to discover what Form of Assent ought to be given to the Doctrine of the Trinity, and other matters of Divine Revelation.

And first, the Testimony propounding those Revelations is on both sides own'd to be divine and infallible, and on that part a compleat foundation, requiring an Assent of simple Belief; and all that the Mind has left, is a Right of Construction of the Terms of Testimony in favour of its own Evidences, where the things testified are the proper Objects of its Informations; but where it is intirely a Stranger to the thing propounded, and its Rules and Laws, and Col-  
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lection of *Idea's*, have no manner of relation to it, there such Right of Construction in their favour, is altogether impertinent and ridiculous.

In all other Matters revealed in the Scriptures, the Mind has a Right of Construction and Exposition of the Terms of the Propositions in favour of its own Evidences, except in what relates to the Mode of the Divine Being; because in nothing else natural Light wholly fails, and the Revelation is not total, but only in part, a superadded Light to Nature's fundamental Stock, and falls no farther under the Assent of Faith, than it exceeds that Foundation; and even the moral Attributes of God are not perfect Revelations, but Improvements of what the Mind had fundamental Evidences of before in it self; reconcilably to which, its Assents to the Propositions of them are to be understood; but the natural Attributes of God, and the Mode of the Divine Being, is both by our own Confession, and by positive Declaration of the same divine Testimony that originally reveals it, declared to have no manner of relation to any of the Mind's own Notices of things; the Consistency or Inconsistency of its Propositions with which, amounts neither to Motive nor Objection; and the application of them to Nature's Laws or Principles, is as absurd, as applying Objects of Sense to wrong Organs, as a blind Man's putting a Speaking-trumpet to his Nose to see withal, and playing grossly at Cross-purposes, by trying things by inept and contrary Rules.

As an Argument of this, I appeal First to Self-consciousness. Secondly, To established and  
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acknowledged Definition. And Thirdly, To positively Divine Declaration.

First, I appeal to Self-consciousness. Whoever consults himself, will perceive, that in this our present State of Being, we live like something born and bred in some large Box, that can come at nothing but what is within the circumference that incloses it : And as God has so order'd it, that our Bodies can crawl no whither off this Globe, so he has confined our Minds to the large visible Circumference round us, and we cannot think without the bounds of this present material System: And as when we put our Imagination upon rambling beyond the Limits of the Creation to extramundane Spaces that we talk of; we still find we fall short, and are still within the bounds of the Creation, and cannot reach the Notion of Infinity; so neither can we raise an *Idea* of any substantial Forms (tho' we study to be never so extravagant and licentious in doing it) whose every part is not borrowed from this material System: A Demonstration, that we must either have a new Set of Instruments of Apprehension, or these we have otherwise set, and more keenly prepared, before their Notices and Informations ought to be admitted in any degree as Evidences of the Modes of spiritual and immaterial Substances, to which their Intelligence has no manner of relation; and consequently all those natural Principles and fundamental Laws, whether primordial and connate, or founded on Observation, by which the Mind forms and directs its Judgment of the Credibility of the Modes of Beings, propounded to it upon

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Testimony, are purely of Geometrical relation; and of impertinent application to Substances, where Geometrical Dimensions, *viz.* Time, Place, Number, and quantitative Parts are not concern'd. And as all our Notions of Possibility, Probability, and Impossibility of the Modes of the Being of things, are founded upon these Indemonstrables and self-evident Principles; so we carry them beyond their natural design, and relation to things, and uncertainly and dangerously presume too far upon them, when we apply them as Rules to things that were never intended to be tryed by them. And it is very doubtful and precarious, how far any of the Standards or Grounds of our present Logick are applicable to spiritual Beings, or whether our very Contradictions hold good, or have any place, where things are to be measured by no such kind of relations. I am sure the Definition of spiritual Beings gives us reason to suspect it is so; to which I next proceed, which is, that they are,

Secondly, *Immaterial* and *Incorporeal*; for a Negation of Matter, or bodily Nature, being its Notion, all Laws, Principles, and Rules of Reasoning, founded on material Properties, and framed with no farther View or Relation, than to the natural Constitution of things within this material, or at least created System, ought consequently to cease, as to them: For we having no other Conception of spiritual Substance, but that it has nothing common to Matter, none of its Properties or Qualities; but every thing unlike, nay quite contrary, as the Name *Immaterial* implies: And we then think most truly of  
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it, and apprehend it, when we have abstracted and struck from its Notion whatever any way agrees to Bodies; and after this Definition thus established, and agreed to, to use still our Evidences relating to Matter, as common Standards to measure its Modes of Being by, as a proper Foundation for our Assents to Propositions concerning it, is acting inconsistently, and admitting that to be Evidence, which we at the same time are supposed to bar; and reducing the Object propounded to a Conformity to that, which we suppose it to be nothing like, nor to have any thing in its Mode of Being in common withal; and whose very Name carries in it contradiction to what we make its correspondence to, a Motive to our Assent to it. And 'tis equally hap hazard, to judge any Proposition of the Mode of the Divine Being to be more or less true, from its Agreeableness to those Evidences of the State of natural things, which we call our *Reason*; because they may be nothing at all to the purpose, and not of common application to it: For if they are applicable to try at all the Truth of the Propositions of the Divine being by, and to influence our Assents either way, then is not the Divine Being *immaterial*, or such whose Notion implies Negation of and Contradiction to all material Properties, being in some respects correspondent; which is a contradiction to what its Name and Definition supposes it to be. And certainly where the Terms of divine Revelation put the Mode of God's being under no certain determination, but are of doubtful construction; Inconsistency with all our natural *Idea's* and No-

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tices of things that are material, is so far from being a just Prejudice to the Mind against assenting to a human Definition of it, that of the two it is rather a Recommendation, as making it look more likely to be right, because, as I said, Remotion of Conformity to our Foundations of Knowledge, better agrees to its being immaterial; and not attending to any *Idea's* of our own to form by them our Conceptions, which God has laid so many Cautions in against in the Scripture as idolatrous; which is,

Thirdly, That positive Declaration of the divine Testimony, which I said forbids our forming Notions of the Mode of God's Being, by an Agreeableness to our own Notices of other things.

— *Ye saw no Similitude* — take good heed unto your selves, for ye saw no Similitude, Deut. iv. *Thou shalt not make to thy self — The likeness of any thing, &c.* Exod. xx. *To whom will ye liken God? or what Likeness will ye compare unto him?* Isa xl. *No Man hath seen God at any time,* John i. 18. *The natural Man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, for they are Foolishness unto him,* 1 Cor. ii. 14. *King invivisible,* 1 Tim. i. 17. Whoever founds his Assents to the Mode of God's Being on any Congruity that is in the Propositions of it to the Evidences of his own Mind, or otherwise than on Authority only, is manifestly guilty of acting contrary to these Scriptures; the doing of which is yet the whole Spirit of *Arianism* and *Anti-Trinitarianism*. What with so much Pertinacity they contend for, is to have the Propositions of the Mode of the Di-  
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vine Being, regulated by their Evidences of things; and Conformity to those Evidences made the Rule of Construction; and Irreconcilableness to them an argument not only of Misconstruction, but even of the Text itself not being genuine, and cause of literal Expunction. What else is their sovereign Bar of *Reason* they appeal to, but the Subjection of the divine Testimony to be tryed by their Evidences of Knowledge; and to bend the Propositions of Revelation to a Reconcilableness of Apprehension to the Laws of natural Beings? For tho' they sometimes cry out against human Definitions; yet it is the Disagreeableness and Indigestibleness of the Propositions to what they call their *Reason*, that we hear most of, as the insuperable Objection. For this they so protest against the *Athanasian* Creed, that its Propositions are *unreasonable* and *intelligible*; from whence they argue back against its expressing the true Sense of the divine Testimony. Hence they call its Propositions monstrous, because it sets out an immaterial Substance, otherwise moded than a material one; makes God nothing like any thing in the whole World; characterizes his Being so, as 'tis Nonsense to think that any living Creature can possibly be. This is the intolerable Imposition on the Understanding so cried out against, that the Divine Being is described to be such as Nature has no Type or Pattern for; when indeed the Propositions would be more monstrous, were they not as they object; but Men then act the part of reasonable Believers, and proceed to the Act like Men of true Judgment, who let not

the Consideration of the Agreeableness of the Propositions to their Evidences affect their Assents either way, to the Mode of that Being, which they have no *Idea's* of of their own, farther than that it is, and is above all that they do know; which they are sure has nothing in it like any things which they do know, and how much contrary and inconsistent, they cannot tell: but very much they must think it is, when Negation of all that is in *them* is its Name and Definition, and Dissimilitude from them all made an Article of Conception, by positive Injunction from itself.

The *Arians*, amongst their other Reflexions on the Orthodox Faith, please themselves with the odious comparison of the Belief of the *Athanasian Propositions* of the Doctrine of the *Trinity* with the absurd Belief of *Transubstantiation*; a Reproach that belongs to themselves: For observe the Analogy between them; the *Papists* believe, where they ought not to believe, but to know; the *Arians* pretend to know, where they ought to believe: Those have recourse to *Testimony*, where they have *Evidence*, which they call it in against; these pretend to *Evidence* where the Nature of the Object does not admit of it, and where there is nothing but *Testimony* to be had: One pretends to believe, what he *knows* to the contrary of; t'other pretends to know what 'tis impossible for him, and by pretending to believe, therefore, because he *knows*, destroys the Virtue and Morality even of what he calls his *Faith*. Both Pretenders unnaturally invert the Order of human Action; the



the *Papists* divest Matter of its essential Properties, and rest it with the Attributes of Divinity, viz. Omnipresency, &c. the *Arians* they rest the Divine Being with the Properties of Matter, and by those construe the Propositions of it; and there is hardly an Impropriety that is charged on the Belief of Transubstantiation, which there is not a Fellow for in their Disbelief of, and Objections against the Doctrine of the Trinity and its Propositions: Those call what should be *Reason*, *Faith*; these what should be *Faith*, *Reason*.

Those natural Evidences therefore, which the *Arians* call *Reason* and *Understanding*, and which truly are so in their proper Place, and when not misapplied; being not to be attended to as of any moment or consideration in our Assents to the Propositions of the Mode of God's Being, but mere Indifferents: we may hence, instead of accusing, admire the Faithfulness and Integrity of the Catholick Church our Mother; shewing that she is not careful in this matter to set out the Object of our Christian Belief, the Mode of the Divine Being, with any Agreeableness to human Understanding, or Flatteries to natural Conceit, or humouring Flesh and Blood at all; which as not conferring with, as she received *Christ Jesus*, so she propounds him to those who are to be *rooted* and *built up* in him in the Faith; taking no heed therein to vain *Philosophy*, and its *vain Deceits*, after the Tradition of Men, after the Rudiments of the World, and not after *Christ*; laying before Men the revealed *Idea's* of God's Being, and

the simple Amount of them, without abating any thing of the Fulness of that Amount, from any Views of Obnoxiousness from the difficulties of distinct Apprehension or Comprehension; without softning or smoothing their genuine Harshness, to make them go the more easily down with the natural Man; or giving them any favourable Glozings, to glib the Passage to Assent; thinking it more decent, that the Mind should rise to them, than they be made to stoop below the native Majesty of their Supernaturalness, to cocker the little and low Imaginations of perverse Carnality, by Attemperations to it. And the Orthodox Sons of this Mother, closely treading her steps in executing her Propositions, proceed in their Assents to them, with the same Indifference and Disregard to natural Notices, neither being the less ready to embrace them, from their seeming Noncompliance with their natural Evidences, nor the more for their exceeding those Standards; but attending to Testimony only and Authority, as their Foundation to assent upon, with Wills disengag'd from Addiction, and Propension to follow the domestick Notices of their own Understandings, and such an humble Resignation of all their natural Evidences to the Manifestation of the Divine Object, as its transcendent Nature requires. In such case, the business of Faith is not to assent by laying obscure things open to the Understanding, but to believe them as they are propounded, be they clear or otherwise (*munus fidei non est ut res obscuræ fiant perspicuæ, sed credere*) and that the Veneration of such My-  
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*series* lies not in the Presumption of logically scanning and canvassing the Consistency of their *Idea's*, and impudently demanding Satisfaction of the divine Proposer to be first given by an apparency of their Possibility, but in *receiving the Words of God blindly* (if that be blindly) *without such kind of understanding them.*

The Authority of *Divine Testimony* being then the only reasonable Foundation of assenting to the Mode of God's Being; we are next to consider which is the reasonable Means, or true way of applying that Testimony to the Mind; and in what State of Proposition its *Idea's* are to be conveyed, in order to their right apprehension. The Testimony it self, 'tis certain, is only the original Terms of divine Revelation; but these original Terms of divine Revelation being deliver'd out in Languages that not one in a thousand, of those to whom they are proposed to be assented to, understand; 'tis therefore evident, that the divine Revealer intended it to be offer'd in some secondary State of Reproposition, wherein such Equivalents to the Force of the original Terms, as the Assenters do apprehend, should be offer'd to them in their stead: which Change of the original Terms for better known Equivalents, must either be more simple and direct, as in Translation; or consequential, by rendering Equivalents not for the simple Terms, but for a Complexion of them; giving the force and amount of them in construction with one another, and what *Idea's* rise from them put together.

Of the Justice of these Equivalents, and how



well they answer the Terms of the original, since nothing is to be inferred from the Quality of the Repropositions themselves, as has been said; nor from the Consistency of the *Idea's* they convey, with the Logick of those to whom they are offer'd to be assented to; therefore the whole Reason on the Assenter's part, of the original Testimony being fairly represented, and its *Idea's* rightly apprehended and believed; and their whole Argument of Assurance of the Rectitude and Certitude of their Assents, is the Authority of the Reproposers. Unless God has appointed some Reproposers, and furnished them with sufficient Authority for this necessary Work, this essential part of the divine Revelation of the Mode of God's Being and Existence might as well not have been made, as be given out in Terms which the generality of those to whom it is propounded cannot apprehend, and in a Tongue in which the Body of Mankind are incapable of coming at it, so impossible to be believed or assented to, unless the *Idea's* of the Testimony are applied to them in Terms which they perceive the force of. The Necessity therefore of assenting to divine Testimony thro' Reproposition, as the only ordinary Means of having justifying Faith, St. *Paul* lays down as granted, *Rom. x.* in that elegant Gradation of his, where he also gives us the first and most essential Note whereby to judge of the Authority of the Reproposers: *How shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a Preacher? And how shall they preach, unless they be sent?*

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The Connexion of the Links of which demonstrative Chain is this: That *believing* the divine Testimony necessarily requires *hearing of it*, as its immediate Foundation; which *hearing* means only the first simple Perception of the Force of Sounds, and Apprehension of their Sense; *Understanding* not in the *Arian* Sense, as implying Evidence in it; but such *Grammatical Understanding*, as is requisite to give an Assent of Faith upon. This *Hearing* as necessarily requires a (*κηρύσσων*) *Preacher*, as we improperly render it; who is indeed a solemn Promulgator, or secondary Proposer of another's Will, officially and by Institution such. *How can they hear without some Reproposer of the divine Testimony to them, to make them sensible what it means*, and offering it to them not in its original Terms, but in such others expressing their Force, as Men are acquainted withal? For 'tis thus only that all Nations have heard, or can hear the Gospel promulged to them; not in the original Terms of Testimony, but in its State of Reproposition, and as cloathed in the Terms of its Promulgers: For it is *THEIR Sound that is gone into all the Earth*, and *THEIR Words unto the Ends of the World*; and *not the original Words of divine Testimony*, which never so went, and cannot be heard universally by Mankind in that Sense that *Hearing* here designs: For the original Terms lie as Foundation, but not as Terms of immediate Application to the Understanding, which necessarily requires them to pass into another State of Proposition.

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And this Reproposition of the original Terms of Testimony, as necessarily requires a divine Mission or Commission in its Authors the Promulgers, and their having a fair Title and positive Institution to that Office of Reproposition; for—how shall *they preach*, viz. promulge or repropose, *unless they be sent*; and this Title is that Authority, which, I have shewn, is only in this Case to be attended to, and the Examination of it is all that the Assenters have to trust to, whereby to argue that the Terms of Reproposition either are, or are not just Equivalents to the original Testimony; into which the Quality of the Propositions themselves can give them no Light, nor any Evidences of their own, or lend them the least Assistance, as to the Subject we are here speaking of.

The Assent then, to the original divine Proposition of the Mode of God's Being, thus necessarily left to depend absolutely upon the Authority of some Reproposition of it, as the Foundation of its Conveyance; and consequently, divinely appointed so to do, especially to all those who themselves are utterly incapable of examining the justice of the Terms of Reproposition, by the Original: what Reproposition can pretend to set up its Authority in competition with the Authority of that, thro' which the Orthodox do assent to the Doctrine of the Trinity? Who should be the Reproposers of this Fundamental, and salvifick Truth, to the simpler and ideotick part of Mankind, but that Body, *the Church*, which the divine Testimony recommends to them by such more than humane



mane Titles, of being the *Body of Christ*, the  
*Spouse of Christ*, *Christ himself*, 1 Cor. xii. 12.  
*the Ground and Pillar of Truth: the Witness*  
*and Keeper of Holy Writ; that has Authority*  
*in Controversies of Faith; (Art. 19. 20.) the*  
*Trumpet of God*, by and in which his *pure*  
*Word* is preached, promulged, sounded out to  
 Men, and is to be so while the World lasts; be-  
 ing *indefectible*, and therefore *indefectible*, be-  
 cause *infallible* in her Assent to the Mode of  
 the divine Being, which is the Essence of her  
 Constitution, and the Foundation of her Being;  
 in which alone, because she cannot err, she  
 therefore cannot fail; and in which, if she errs,  
 her Being is lost, and she does fail, together  
 with God's Promise. What Authority, what  
 pretended Reason or Understanding, can ba-  
 lance the Authority of the common Testimony  
 of this Body, concerning the Thing that is its  
 own Essence? Can Men be justly charged with  
 want of Reason in their Faith, that throw in  
 their Lot with this Body? And when they must  
 believe somebody, chuse its Testimony for their  
 Foundation, rather than harken to the suspec-  
 ted Cavils of some private Setters up against  
 it, who would put their Assents upon imprac-  
 ticable Foundations? Were there no divine  
 Declarations in favour of hearkning to the com-  
 mon Voice of the Christian Church, in this  
 Case, yet upon the Principles of natural Pru-  
 dence and Judgment, Men are bound to assent  
 to the *Athanasian* and *Nicene* Propositions;  
 were there no more in it than that, *Peritis in*  
*suâ arte credendum*, the Judgment of the com-  
 mon

mon Body of the Churches Officers, in the Business that God has appointed them to, and concerning the particular Subject of their Care and Study in their Profession, is what wise or modest Men ought to think they should be determined by; especially where there is no Shadow of Temptation to have their Integrity corrupted, nor any manner of worldly End to be answered by believing this way, more than that, besides the simple Moment of Truth; when they themselves trust their Salvation and their All in the same Bottom. Were the Clergy, to get any thing in this World, by the Doctrine of the Trinity being believed, and Christ's Divinity, as the *Romish* Priests, by some of their Popish Doctrines; did it any way tend to magnify their Office, or worldly Interests, or open the way to any gainful Trade to them, more than if the *Arian* Doctrines prevailed, there might be reason to suspect their Veracity: but Orthodoxy cannot be charged with any worldly Views; and if the Mind has any Complaints of its natural Rights being invaded, of Imposition or Self-denial, 'tis a fruitless Tyranny to *them* who are common Sufferers in the Cause.

Let us now see what wise Work our mighty Men of *Reason* make of it, in their way of *believing*, in what inextricable Difficulties they entangle themselves, how loose their Doctrine is, how impracticable their Scheme, how inconsistent their fundamental Rules and Principles are with Truth, with each other, and how inconsistent their own very Practice is with those their own fundamental Rules and Principles?

Their

Their fundamental Principles and Rules of Believing are :

*First*, That the Scriptures are the Rule of Faith.

*Secondly*, That humane Definitions and Interpretations are not proper Grounds of Faith, nor the means of conveying its Propositions to Mens Minds, with Authority, simply and absolutely such ; or that Men are not bound to assent to any Doctrines upon Testimony only, without some Evidence of their own, and unless Men immediately by themselves know and are assured some other way, than thro' that Testimony, that these Doctrines are propounded in the Scripture ; this, so far as I understand them, is the Condition and Terms of *Believing*, which they insist upon against *Authority*.

By the Scriptures, in their first Principles, they mean the original Revelation delivered out by God, in *Greek* and *Hebrew* Words ; so Dr. *Clark* their Foreman, in *Matters of humane Testimony or divine Revelation, the only Rule of Truth, is the Testimony or Revelation itself, or the Doctrine of Christ* ; that is, the true and right Sense of those original Words ; (*ib.*) *the only Rule of Faith therefore to every Christian, is the Doctrine of Christ, and that Doctrine as apply'd to him by his own Understanding* ; or the original Words rightly understood immediately by a Man's self.

By *the Rule of Faith*, they both mean the *materia credenda*, the what is to be believed, and also the Means itself of believing, so far as that Means puts us under Obligation ; so that it



is both the Means and the End; the reason why you believe itself, and the Guide and Directory by which you are to assent to Propositions of it, in any other Form or State besides the Original. In the second Proposition, by *Definitions*, they mean the Sense of Scripture being propounded in other Words and Terms, different from those of the original Revelation.

By *humane* they design, or include, at least, such Definitions, made as well by the Church Catholick to all Christians, as by particular Churches to their Members.

By *Definitions* mentioned in general, and without any Note of Exception, they must be understood to intend all sorts of Definitions whatsoever: especially since the same reason that lies against one sort lies against all; which is, that they are, in *their* Judgment, *humane*.

By *Authority* they mean an Obligation to believe, laid in the Testimony of the Proposers of these Definitions.

And let me here remark, that their invalidating the Argument of Ecclesiastical Authority and Testimony, is Demonstration enough of their being conscious that it stands against them; and lays this part of their Doctrine against the Authority of humane Definitions, under shrewd Suspicions of being founded upon the Consideration of its not being in their favour.

The Definitions therefore here struck at, may be distinguished into, 1. Tradition; 2. Consequences drawn, containing Creeds and Articles of Faith, and Discipline of particular Churches to their Members; and 3. Translations.

And

And lastly observe, that this their Doctrine of the nullity of Authority in humane Definitions, and the Condition of not assenting to them, further than Men immediately perceive in themselves their Identity and Correspondence with the original Revelation, is given out indefinitely, and without any Regard to the different Capacities and Qualifications of Persons. The learned and the altogether illiterate, are equally bound to try and examine by themselves, the Justice and Correspondence of these Definitions with the original Revelation; which they are so far to understand, as from their own Evidence and Judgment of Correspondence with the Revelation, and not from the Proposers Authority to give their Assent, or to withhold it; *the only Rule of Faith to every Christian, is the Doctrine of Christ, &c. (Introduction.)*

This being their Doctrine, and these their Principles for Believing; let us now come to the Practice of them.

*First*, As to their first Principle, that *the Scriptures are the Rule of Faith*, in a sound and practicable Sense, we are all here agreed. But then even this their first Principle cannot be established, but upon contradiction to their second; nor can they find any other Foundation for Assent to it, but *Testimony*, and the *Authority* of that *Definition* which they except against as being merely humane. For it is a very troublesome Question to go a Step farther back with them, and ask them upon what Foundation Assent to this Principle, *that the Scripture is the Rule of Faith*, is given? Or which way they are

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assured

assured which are those Scriptures that are that Rule? They dare not say that they know which is divine Revelation, and which is not, by any common natural Evidences; by which it may appear to be so to the common Body of Mankind, who are obliged to take the Scriptures as such; and that the Revelation relates to, or that the Settlement of the Canon of Scripture depends on any Demonstration, which every particular Person is capable of working for himself. And yet they must say this too, or else they must put the Assent to it upon the Foundation of Testimony and its Authority; and if they put it upon Testimony, that Testimony must either be divine Testimony or humane. If it be divine Testimony, it must either be the Scriptures themselves, which cannot be; because then they must believe them to be the Word of God before they do believe them to be so; which is *idem per idem*, and the Argument circular; or some other Revelation. But there is none such, besides the exploded Enthusiasm of the private and inward Testimony of the Spirit, which ill becomes such rational Believers to take up withal: and in short when they have tried every thing, and nothing else will do, they are forced to take up with the Churches Tradition; and it is evident matter of Fact, that the simpler part of Believers neither have, nor can have, any other Grounds to assent to the Books we call the Scriptures, being the Rule of Faith and divine Revelation, than Catholick Tradition; and that too implicit in the Tradition of the particular Church they are Members of, without



out any Grounds of historical Knowledge, or other Evidences to confirm it to them; which historical Knowledge, to those that have it, is but seeing more Links of the same Chain, fixed to humane Definition at top. For what else is that we now call Tradition of the Scriptures being the Word of God, but Definition of their so being at first, and some first positive Act of Definition of their so being perpetuated and continually repeated? For Tradition differs from formal Definition, as Custom does from positive Law; it is a Definition whose Author is unknown, and the Records of whose Original are lost; for it cannot be supposed that Men slipped at first (they knew not how, nor why, nor when) into an universal Consent, that all the Books we now call the Scriptures, were the Revelations of God, or the Writings of those whose Names they bear. But the Ground of that Belief, if we run it back to its Origine, must either be some formal Act of Determination, settling the Canon in a conciliar way: or which is still a weaker Foundation, must be the Testimony of private and particular Men, first assuring particular Churches; and those particular Churches assuring other Churches, that such and such Books were written by such and such Persons; and so from few only, who at first see the original Scriptures, and of those few, fewer that knew by Evidences, that the Books were the Author's whose Names they bear; the Assent must propagate itself to all the rest, not only in after Ages, but even in that very first, upon Authority only.

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For instance, none could at first assent to the Epistles to the *Corinthians* being *St. Paul's*, but the *Corinthians* themselves, to whom they were directed, and who might have Evidences of it; upon whose Testimony, and its Authority, all the rest of the Christian World both then and since depend; and all other Christians must take the Gospels on trust from those, who at first only knew them to be genuine.

The Tradition of the Church therefore, upon which we now assent to the Scriptures being the Word of God, and are bound to assent to their so being (if we are bound to it at all) not only ultimately resolves itself into Definition, but is indeed a looser and more exceptionable kind of Definition; since the utmost that we can imagine to its Advantage, is, that it had as great and solemn a Foundation as *the Nicene Creed* has. And as that Ecclesiastical Definition of Scripture which we call the *Creed of Nice*, is but a *written Tradition*; so the *Catholick Tradition*, upon which we take the Scriptures to be the Word of God, is but an *unwritten Creed*, inferior to the Authority of that of *Nice* in this, that we know not how, or on what Testimony it was at first founded: Nor does the *Nicene Creed* come behind the Churches Tradition of the Scriptures, in the Authority of past Testimony, by universality of Acceptance and Catholick Assent to it. For neither has the Tradition of the Scriptures wanted Variety of private Objecters, that have in their Turns rejected almost each of the sacred Books; or if Assent to the Scriptures being the Word of  
God,

God, were more universal than to the *Nicene* Definitions ; yet the Universality of Testimony does not change its Nature and Quality, but leaves it humane Definition still ; nor at all cures the Inconsistency of Men being obliged to assent to the Divinity of the Scriptures upon it, with the *Arian* Doctrine concerning humane Definitions. And here therefore, inconsistently with themselves, whilst the *Arians* deny any Obligation to assent to the *Nicene* Definition, as an insufficient Foundation of Assent to one single Article of Faith, they find themselves necessitated at the same time to take the like Definition, of the same Body, more uncertainly made, and with other Disadvantages, under the Name of Tradition, as a sufficient Foundation for the whole Body of Christianity. And whilst they pretend to preach down the Authority of humane Definitions, and reflect on the Orthodox, for resting on them as the Foundation of conveyance of the divine Propositions from the Scripture, they themselves lay humane Definitions, as the sole Foundation of Assent to their very *fundamentum fundamentorum* ; cry down the Authority of humane Definitions of this Point and that, which they have a natural Dislike to ; and take at last all the divine Revelations at once together upon that very Authority ; the whole Christian World reclaiming them, and crying out against the Insufficiency of such a Foundation. For the Orthodox are indeed the Men, who being sensible how improper a Foundation the Authority of humane Definition is for Christian Faith, and perceiving that all Faith ul-



rimately resolves itself into the Authority of Catholick Tradition, as the only Foundation on which we can assent to the Scriptures being God's Word (and that the Quality of all our Acts of Faith depends on the Quality of this its Foundation; if that be infallible Testimony, then is their Faith Divine; if merely humane and fallible, such must their Faith be) wisely therefore insist on the necessary Doctrine of the Catholick Churches Infallibility, and the Authority of that Tradition upon which we believe the Scriptures to be God's Word, to be more than that of humane Testimony; without which granted, the whole Christian Faith must inevitably rest on the bare Authority of that humane Definition, which these false Preachers against, whilst they deny, establish the very thing they pretend to destroy. For if the universal Tradition, upon which we assent to the divine Revelations, be nothing but *Authority, Testimony, Definition*; if the *Arians* say, as they do, that it is *humane Definition*; they own the Authority of humane Definitions, and contradict their own Principle that way; if they should say 'tis *infallible Authority*, they ruin their Cause, which that same Authority has given against them.

Well, but let us pass over this Difficulty, and grant them their Principle, that the *Scriptures are the Rule of Faith*, without any Questions asked how it comes to be so to them; by saying 'tis an Indemonstrable, a *Datum*, a what you will; or rather by letting it lye and sleep in the Dark, and say nothing of it, which is their

best

best way ; let us see how they will order their Rule of Faith, now they have it upon no Body can tell what Foundation ; and how they will contrive to apply it with safety to their darling Principle, of Men not being bound to assent to its Propositions, by any humane Definitions ; in vainly labouring to bring which about, we see in them the true Spirit of heretical Obstinacy, which is to part with any thing rather than their Errors. For here they shew, that they neither matter Rule of Faith, nor any thing else, when it makes against their Cause ; and have plainly took up this desperate Resolution, that unless Men can assent to the Propositions of divine Revelation, otherwise than thro' Obligation to humane Definitions, they should not be bound to assent to them at all, or rather be bound not to assent to them.

It is a plain Case, that if Men are bound to believe what is propounded to them, in a Tongue which they themselves do not understand, neither are capable of so doing, that they must be bound to believe what some body else tells them is the meaning of it, in a Tongue which they do understand ; nor can their Obligation to the End, exceed their Obligation to this Means. If they are absolutely bound to the End, they are also as absolutely bound to the Means ; if they are acquitted from Obligation to the Means, they are so far thereby acquitted from Obligation to the End. So far therefore, as every unlearned Christian, that does not understand the *Hebrew* and *Greek* Tongue, in which the divine Revelations were originally propoun-

ded, is bound to assent to what is propounded in those Revelations; so far, by Virtue of that Obligation, is he also necessarily bound to submit to the Authority of humane Definition, if Translation of the Scriptures into a known Tongue, and Interpretation of them, be Definition. And the only way therefore that the *Arians* have to maintain their Doctrine against the Authority of humane Definitions of Scripture here, is either :

*First*, To deny that unlearned, and much more unletter'd Christians, are under any Obligation to assent to the Propositions of the Scriptures at all; but by Virtue of their Incapacity to understand immediately of themselves the Terms they are deliver'd in, are thereby at liberty to assent to them or not; or are indeed bound in that State, not to assent to them at all;

Or, *Secondly*, That Translations of the Scriptures into known Tongues, and Interpretations of them, are not humane Definitions of them; or are excepted:

Or, *Thirdly*, To open to the unlearned and unletter'd, some other way, practicable to every such unqualify'd Person, whereby they may apprehend what is propounded to them in Tongues unknown, and assent to it, besides Translation and Interpretation.

Tho' they dare not fairly and professedly stand to and make good any one of these Positions, necessary to justify their Doctrine against the Authority of humane Definitions of Scripture, yet they here and there throw out smat-

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tering Hints in favour of each of them, by the bye; but it must only be a touch and away, so as to come off again, and deny that they insist upon any such thing, if they are charged with it.

Thus, as to the first, *viz.* acquitting all unletter'd and unlearned Christians from Obligation to assent to the Propositions of Scripture at all, and declaring it their Duty not to do it; tho' they are conscious it sounds ill, and is too shocking to be bluntly proposed, and directly preached up; yet, as their Doctrine implies it, and it is its manifest Consequence, we ought to think that they design it. However therefore they may disguise and dissemble it, and, as an impudent Blind for a Design that they are ashamed to own, pretend to be warm Sticklers for all Mens understanding and believing the Scriptures; and *search the Scriptures; understand the Scriptures; trust nothing but the Scriptures, &c.* is what their Mouths are full of; yet by decrying and destroying the only means by which this is to be done, and rendring it first impracticable and impossible, they are the very Men, who at the same time design they shall not do it. For this is the End of all their Logick and Rhetorick, to persuade Men rather to sit down contented Infidels, and let the Propositions of divine Revelation lye unassented to, than to think themselves obliged to take them from such Hands, which they call *humane Definition*, that must communicate them to their Minds (if they are communicated at all) as must draw Condemnation on their *Arian Cause*. Can

you understand and assent to the Scriptures, so as to be at liberty not to believe the Doctrine of the Trinity, and Christ's Divinity? If you cannot, 'tis not your Duty to assent to them on those Terms; and if this be the Choice, you ought to be Infidels rather than Orthodox Christians. A learned Country propagator therefore of this their Doctrine against the Authority of humane Definitions, is very open in the Case (*Mr. Bold's Duty of Christians, with respect to humane Interpretations and Decisions, &c.*)

P. 5. *Every Christian*——ought not to entertain any Sense, as the meaning of the Holy Ghost, if he cannot alledge any thing, but that such a Man, or Number of Men, perhaps, of great Name, &c. have declared that that was the meaning of the Holy Ghost: till he can find a better Reason than that, &c. he may safely conclude—that he is under no Obligation, as yet, to believe any thing more concerning it, but that in general it contains part of the Mind of his Lord; but, what in particular he is not concerned to believe.

P. 9.—*Be they ever so many who concur in declaring that such a Sense was the meaning of the Holy Ghost, &c. their concurrent declaring that was the meaning of the Holy Ghost, gives no rational Satisfaction to any Man that it was so, &c.*

This Gentleman very ingeniously plays the tell truth with us; and more consistently with himself, than some others, owns Men to be so far acquitted from the End, as the Means is deny'd to them; and that every Christian who  
has

has no better Reason for it than Authority and Testimony (tho' it be the concurrent Testimony of all Mankind) is under no Obligation to believe one Sentence to be the Meaning of the original Revelation, or assent to it in any Sense whatever. And if humane Definitions are not obligatory, not one Man in a thousand can or ought to assent to any thing contain'd in Scripture, who have no better nor other Reason to assent, than Authority and humane Definition only, if Translation and Interpretation be so.

Which is what, Secondly, they must deny, to make good their Doctrine against humane Definitions; *viz.* That Translations and Interpretations of the original Terms of divine Revelation are not Determinations of its Sense, nor humane Definitions.

One would have thought that Translations and Interpretations being the ordinary and generally supposed necessary Conveyance of the original Testimony to Mens Minds, that those who deny the Authority of humane Definitions of it, should either have took care to except against them, as not meant by them, if they are Modes of humane Definition; yet this they do not do, but propose their Doctrine indefinitely, and in such general Terms, as manifestly includes them; or have proved that they are not humane Definitions at all. But to our great Surprise they think not fit to attempt any relief of their Doctrine this way from Inconsistency, thinking it more adviseable to say nothing of the matter, and pass it off without any notice taken, than to make it worse by stirring in it. For what indeed can they



they say? That Translations, it is true, are humane Definitions; but they except and do not mean *them*; that is giving up their Cause, and owning, that humane Definitions of the Rule of Faith are obligatory; and the same Reasons that except them, will be found to except all others; which is Necessity and Use. Or if they say that Translations are not humane Definitions, let them tell us what are so, and wherein definitive Nature consists, and how they come not to fall under that Character. The Author aforementioned indeed, in answer to some private *Quere's* of mine, which he favour'd me withal; (What Provision the Doctrine against the Authority of humane Definitions of Scripture, left for unlearned and unsettled Christians? and which way it was possible for them to assent to the Propositions of the original Revelation, but thro' Translation and Interpretation, which was humane Definition?) offers at both these Excuses for their Doctrine; as first, that they are excepted, and not meant by them: *The Interpretations spoken of in my Discourse are perfectly of another kind.* But then they should propose their Doctrine with distinction, which they dare not do. But not satisfied with this, he says, *That Translations, properly so called, differ not from the Original in any thing but articulate Sounds, &c.* But then we must suppose them to be just Translations; and with the help of the same Supposal, all other Definitions whatsoever differ nothing from the Original: But that Supposal is the thing in dispute, whether those, who understand not the Original, are bound to believe them to be  
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just upon simple Testimony and humane Authority? Thirdly, he says, *That Translations are Affirmations only of Matter of Fact, &c.* That is, as I apprehend, Translations are authoritative Conveyances of the material part of the Propositions of the Original; but so as to be under no determinate Sense; and without the like Obligation to any particular Meaning, yet leaving every Man a Right still and Liberty to assent to them in that Sense himself thinks fittest to give them. But as this is a Concession that humane Testimony and Definition is authoritative as to one part of the Original; so I think he might e'en as well let it be so as to the other too, because the other is included in it; since the Sense of Propositions depends intirely on the Words they are express'd by; and he that is Judge for me as to the one, leaves me but a poor Right as to the other. To translate the Original under no determinate Meaning, is certainly a nice Piece of Work; and to preserve that its Indetermination in its translated State, and convey it down in Words so evenly, as a *Materia informis*, as to have no necessary Meaning impress'd upon it, is as a clear Conveyance.

However, this Gentleman offers at Consistency, which Dr. *Clark* in his Introduction does not so much as do; who denying the Obligation to assent to the Rule of Faith thro' humane Definition, and neither excepting Translations, nor denying them to be such, nor yet shewing any other way by which it is possible for them who understand not the Originals to assent to it without

without them ; neither in short acquitting Men from the Obligation of assenting to the Scriptures, nor leaving a Possibility of doing it ; plunges on in Inconsistency, cries, believe the original Testimony, understand it your selves immediately, trust to no body, telling you this and t'other is the Sense of it, but neither tells them how, or which way it is possible ; but first cutting off the Means, then presses the Duty, and leaves them ; takes care first to pull out their Teeth, and then cries, good People, you ought all to crack Almonds for your selves with your own Mouths, or you ought not to have the Kernels. Is it not a perfect Banter and Insult upon all that understand not the Originals, to tell them, they must *make use of their best Understanding for apprehending the Rule of Faith* ; that they are to make use of all other *Helps and Assistances*, &c. beside the Authority of humane Definition ? What Helps, what Assistances can they make use of beside ? Why does he not tell them ? Which way can they make use of their Understanding to do this, but that which he bars up ? To what purpose is it to tell Men, *That in matters of humane Testimony, or divine Revelation, the only Rule of Truth is the Testimony or Revelation it self* ? That is, the Original is the only thing in the World to try a Copy by, when he knows the original Revelation itself is out of reach of those, for whose Use this worthy Maxim is design'd, and they are incapable, by supposition, of so trying it. He is happy at other times in writing plain and clearly to be understood, and talks much against *Unintelligibles*,  
and



and *things hard to be understood*; yet what a dark pack of stuff does he pretend to give out, as the great Rule in this Affair, which, if any thing, should be plain.

Introduct. *The only Rule of Faith therefore to every Christian is the Doctrine of Christ, and that Doctrine as applyed to him by his own Understanding.*

What a Riddle is here instead of a Rule? In which there is not one Term that any Man but himself can be sure what he means by it.

What he means by the *Rule of Faith*, is hard to say; but it must some way or other, I suppose, mean *That*, the Belief of which makes Men to be Christians.

By *every Christian*, (since he is particularly treating of essential Christianity, and giving direction for the right way of becoming so) we must therefore understand every Man, that is yet no Christian: For his Application is past, and the Rule already executed by those that are already Christians; and we must understand it thus by *Prolepsis*, or his Rule is preposterous, and is only useful when the business is done.

What *the Doctrine of Christ* means is also very doubtful: That it means the original divine Revelation or Testimony itself, is plain from what he has said before; but whether he means the original Terms and Words of this original Testimony, or every Man's own Sense of those Words, or the true and right Sense of them, one cannot tell.

What he would have by *applying this Doctrine*, is likewise not clear; neither the thing  
itself

itself that is to be done, nor the way how it is to be done, nor to what end it is to be done. Application, I know, signifies the putting to of something to another; but that which is to make this Application, and that which it is to be applied to, which come after, make it a puzzling piece of Language to know the Meaning of it.

For what he means by *a Man's own Understanding* (the Agent by which the Application is to be made) is harder than any of the rest: For I thought the end of this Application had been, that the Doctrine of *Christ* might be understood; but being applied by his Understanding, implies that it is understood already, and putting it to farther Ends and Uses after it is so. For how can the Understanding apply what it does not understand? And to what should it apply it? And that is what remains of this excellent Rule.

That the Doctrine of *Christ* must be applied by every Christian by his own Understanding *to himself*, and what this self is, without the Understanding, and besides the Understanding, God knows; or what he means by his whole Doctrine of Confusion, that stands upon the supposed Truth of what he argues against, as its Foundation.

Well, but let us see what we can bring this grand Rule to. By the *Doctrine of Christ* therefore let us suppose that he means the true and right Sense of the original Revelation. But then a Man must either know which is this Doctrine of *Christ*, or must not know which is it: If he do not know which is it, how shall he know  
what

what to apply ? If he does know, the Application itself is needless ; the end of which is to know or understand it. But he makes the End the Means to itself ; and wisely taking for granted the thing in dispute, *which is how to know which is the Doctrine of Christ*, goes upon very sure grounds.

Well, but let the Doctrine of *Christ* be the original Terms of Revelation, and instead of these being *applied to himself by a Man's own Understanding*, let them be applied *by himself to his Understanding*, in order to apprehend their Meaning and Assent to them ; and what can we make of it thus ? Which way can a Man altogether illiterate, or that understands not the Originals, try or use any kind of Endeavour to do this ? Or what Helps and Assistances is he capable of calling in, besides simple and absolute Authority, and intire and uncondition'd Dependence on some humane Definition or other ? He may indeed choose what Authority, or what Definition he will assent upon ; but still it must be upon the simple Authority of some or other of them, without any Mixture of Composition with any Evidences of his own : For not being capable of trying the Definitions, neither is he capable of comparing them with one another, nor has any Foundation to go upon to judge which is best, and the likeliest to be right. Shall he judge that to be the rightest, wherein most or all agree ? That I know the *Arians* will not agree to. But allowing it to be so, yet this does not mend the matter, since 'tis but humane Testimony still. Shall he compare Text against  
Text,



Text, and assent to that Sense which is not contradictory to others, and best reconcilable with the rest? O! but the poor Man cannot read, neither knows one Letter in a Book, and can play the Casuist no farther than by word of mouth. Some body, that ought to be of no persuasion, thinks fit to tell him, what is here and there, on this side of the question or that. Suppose, for instance, the Article to be assented to is the Doctrine of the Trinity, and *Christ's* Divinity, he is to carry all Dr. *Clark's* Scripture-Doctrine in his Head, and then to number Texts and weigh them, and so pronounce sentence, which is the true Meaning of the Divine Oracles. Well, but he can read; and how will he judge better then? Why then he can compare Translations, read Commentators, consult Interpreters, &c. But still all this (if he is ignorant of the Originals) is but considering whose word he had best take; and resolves itself into *humane Definition*, as its sole Foundation, if Translation be so: And how far therefore those may be bound by the Authority of humane Definition, who understand the Originals, may be a question; because every Man having a fundamental Right to assent on his own Evidences of Information, so far as they will go, and not being bound to assent on Authority, but where they fail; it is no farther his Duty to forego and resign that his natural Right, than either positive divine Institution makes it to be so, or his own voluntary Act and Deed, in compliance with the nature of political Life, and the Terms of being Member of some Society, which implies  
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its Resignation. But it is manifest that those who understand not the original Languages, that the divine Revelations are given out in, are absolutely bound, and without reserve, to the Authority of humane Definition; nor can they say of any Propositions, that this more than that is likely to be the Mind of God in the Rule of Faith: For how should they judge of the Likeness of a thing, when they do not know the thing 'tis likened to? Putting Men upon judging of the Justice of Translations and humane Definitions, that are ignorant of the Originals, puts me in mind of a piece of Raillery of St. *Austin's*, upon the Academicks, I think; who own'd that they knew not what *Verum* was; but yet could tell what was *Verisimile*: They did not know what Truth itself was, but would pretend to know what was like Truth, for all that. He presently asked him who maintain'd the Rationality of this Doctrine, whether he was not very like his great Grandfather? Whom the other being an utter Stranger to, presently perceived that he must say, How can I tell? and so by his Answer convict himself of the Vanity of pretending to judge of the Likeness of a thing, to another that we are Strangers to. The utmost that the wisest Man can do, in order rightly to apprehend and assent to the divine Oracles, if he understands not the Originals, is upon prudential Considerations to resolve, who are the likeliest Men to tell him the truth; and to exercise a negative Judgment upon humane Definitions, by examining them by with natural Principles, and by them to reject and refuse Assent,

as suspicious, to those that sound least consistently; and may conclude this and that cannot be there: but from no Consistency of Propositions with his Notions, or their being to his well liking, can he draw any Conclusion affirmatively, that this or that is there: And even this negative Right of judging fails him, as I have said, where the Mode of the Divine Being is the Subject; where all his Evidences from natural Principles are out of doors; and consistency with them is not any argument that they may be true, nor Inconsistency with them any reasonable ground of Prejudice, why they may not be the divine Revelations; but the Authority of Testimony is all that is to be attended to.

The last sort of divine Definitions, whose Authority the *Arians*, &c. deny, are *Consequences*; by which they mean, First, *Catholick Creeds*, viz. *the Apostles Creed*, *the Nicene Creed*, and *the Athanasian Creed*; which they would not have obligatory to all Christians; as supposed humane Definitions, in their Language and Esteem: And secondly, Articles of Faith and Religion proposed by particular Churches to their Members.

Because it is by the *Athanasian* and *Nicene* Creeds that *Arianism* and *Antitrinitarianism* stand formally condemned by Judgment Ecclesiastical; therefore 'tis no wonder that they are particularly and principally the Mark against which all their Batteries are raised, and their Artillery mounted and directed; which they fight against with that true heretical Spirit, that they matter not what they pull down or tear up, nor what



what Mischief they do, if they could but have their wills upon them. Could they but invent Weapons and Principles to set aside Obligation to these, and demolish their Authority, they care not what they did more, as I have observed before: Tho' they sunk the Scriptures and Christianity together with them, all should go rather than fail; rather than lose the plausible Objection of humane Definition, they will let it shake the Foundations of all Christian Faith, and render the Scriptures useless.

Let us therefore take a short View of the Wisdom and Consistency of these *reasonable Believers* in this part of their Doctrine, denying the Authority of this sort of Definitions, *viz. Consequences from Scripture* propounded in the Churches *Creeds*.

Our Church, in the Sixth Article, distinguishes all matter of *Belief* necessary to Salvation, into what is *read* in the Holy Scriptures, and what may be *proved* from thence; which latter kind of material Object of Faith, are the *Consequences* we are here considering; which are Propositions not expressly read in the Scripture, but what follows from what is read, as Inference and Conclusion drawn from it, express in other and different Terms.

These Consequences the *Arians* admit, as things in themselves lawful, and maintain many of them as Articles of Faith, and insist not on the Necessity of every thing being literally found in the Scripture, that is to be believed; if by undeniable consequence it does but follow from thence.

They not only allow of their Lawfulness, but likewise acknowledge the Usefulness of drawing such consequential Propositions; and Dr. *Clark* therefore, as a Method of Choice, reduces all the expresse Propositions of fundamental Christianity found in the Scriptures, relating to the Doctrine of the Trinity and *Christ's* Divinity, into this consequential State of Definition and Reproposition (both in Form and Terms different from the divinely revealed) as the effectual way both of feeling the force of the divine Propositions, and virtually assenting to them thro' them; and does the very business of our Creeds, upon the very same Subject: For what are his Propositions, but so many little Creeds?

And that such Consequences are not only useful, but also absolutely necessary, both to be propounded, and to be assented to when propounded, is also manifest; because from the very beginning of Christianity its fundamental Truths have been always this way proposed. And if the fundamental Articles of the Apostles Creed (as it is called at least) are humane Definitions of this consequential kind, and were never intended to be believed, till Men could prove them from Scripture; nor farther to be believed, than every Man for himself feels in himself the force of the Evidence from that Proof; it must be late in the Day before any Man can be qualified to be a Christian, if Belief of the Articles of that Creed is necessary to his being so: And if they will not take the Propounders word for it, nor believe till the Foundation in Scripture is apparent to them, very few ought to profess they believe

believe *Christ's* Descent into Hell, the Article of the Catholick Church in a way to make sense of it, or the Communion of Saints till their dying Day, if the Articles of this Creed are Consequences from Scripture. They were drawn up the Day the Canon was made at least, and most of them before the Books were written that they were drawn from. And as it was an intolerable piece of Negligence in the first Definers of Scripture by these Consequences, as well as of the Christian World since, not to put down the original References, that the Articles of this Creed were drawn from, and not to plaister it round with Texts sufficient to put it readily in an obligatory Form to all Christians, to whom it was proposed as the initiatory Terms of the Gospel-covenant; at least not to give notice, that they insisted on Obligation to assent to it, no farther than every Person had in himself Evidences of its Connexion with the original Revelation, and to leave that to our modern *Clarks, &c.* to charge on every Man as his Duty: so was it a grosser Oversight still, to take no notice at all of the Scriptures themselves, in this compleat Body of Fundamentals; nor to make so much as the Belief of them to be God's Word, one of its Articles. But instead of any notice taken of the Scriptures, it turns us over to the Catholick Church, and refers us to the Body of Propounders, and their Authority, for the argument of our Assent to it. A Demonstration to me, that the Articles of this Creed were not Deductions from the Scriptures then written; but that the Scriptures themselves were written to confirm



this Creed: For what could the Gospels be writ for else, but to confirm the Truth of the Christian Faith before in being? And as the Gospel was preached before it was written, so its History was writ to confirm what had been preached, and the Substance of it put into this Form of sound Words. But I may take another time to do justice to the Antiquity of this Creed, and shew that its Articles are not Consequences from Scripture, but before the Scriptures were written; and that the Argument on which every Christian, as such, assents to the Scriptures being God's Word, is lodged in this Creed. It is sufficient for my present purpose, that admitting it to be a consequential Definition of Scripture, as these People would have it; its Antiquity is so great, as to shew that humane Definitions of Scripture have been always thought necessary, for the Propositions of Revelation to be thro' them assented to. And as it is certain there were Creeds before the written Gospels, &c. had a Being, to take them from; so to abolish Creeds is the same thing as to abolish the Scriptures, that must necessarily be believed thro' them.

As these consequential Definitions, that we call Creeds, are necessary to be drawn from Scripture; so there must be the same Necessity for their being believed, when they are drawn: For that being the End and Reason of their being drawn, the Obligation of drawing them cannot exceed the Obligation of believing them; and I presume they will own every Christian bound to assent to the fundamental Articles, at least, of the Apostles Creed.

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As these consequential humane Definitions, which we call Creeds, are necessary to be drawn, and as necessary to be believed when drawn; so it is evident that every Christian is not able to draw them for himself. For the same Incapacity which makes it impracticable and impossible for every Christian to discharge his Obligation of assenting to the express Propositions of divine Revelation, unless thro' a supposed Obligation to assent to them upon the Authority of humane Definition, and Interpretation, bringing them under his Cognizance; makes it still more impracticable to draw Consequences from them: because to do this, besides the Grammatical Qualification of understanding the original Tongues, here also the Qualification of a logical Ability is also required; in such a miscellaneous History, such a (*Sylva*) Wood as the Books of Scripture are, how few (supposing all to understand the Languages) are capable of reducing the Matter into its proper Order, so as to distinguish what is fundamentally necessary to be understood and believed, from what is not so; and to tell where Fundamentals stop? Or this bold Work being presumptuously done, how few are capable of collecting all the scatter'd Enunciations and Propositions of things fundamental, and justly extracting the whole Force and Virtue of them in consequence? Dr. *Clark* therefore, after he has collected all the Texts relating to the Doctrine of the Trinity, and Christ's Divinity, and perform'd that part of the Task, which he presum'd every Christian

was not so well qualify'd to do for himself, tho' he sets them before his Readers in the Tongue they were all supposed well to understand, yet still draws out the Consequences of them, for such as he presumed less capable of doing it for themselves; tho' he would have those Consequences both plain and clear.

And as he thereby confesses that every Christian is not capable of drawing the necessary consequential Definitions from Scripture, tho' understood, for themselves:

So neither lastly, is every Christian capable of judging of the Justice of these Deductions, when drawn for them, and propounded to them by others; nor are capable of assenting to them upon any other Argument or Foundation (as being the Amount of the Terms of divine Revelation and contain'd in them) than the Testimony of the Propounders and its Authority. The greatest part of the Christian World, who are bound to believe the essential Truths of Christianity, drawn from the Scriptures for them, propounded to them in those *humane Definitions*, our Creeds, are either Persons wholly illiterate, or Women, Children, and unadult Persons; and is it not reasonable Work to put each of these upon syllogizing for themselves, and drawing out from the original Revelation, a Creed upon their own Logick? Is it not shutting them up in invincible Infidelity, to bid them not to assent to any Repropositions of divine Revelation, and the Consequences of it, till they are convinced of the Connexion with it upon their own immediate Evidences? May they not as well



well bid them apply their Heads against a Stonewall, as apply the Consequences in the Creeds to the original Revelation, or even to its Translations, in order to judge whether they fairly proceed as Conclusions? Is it not the same thing, as to these, utterly to destroy all Creeds, as to unauthorize them? What vain, what absurd, what unnatural, and unheard of Doctrine is this? Shew me, from the Foundations of Christianity, wherever such Terms of being taken into the Covenant were insisted upon, that Men should not assent to the Articles of Christianity upon Authority? Where ever were any Catechumens, or Candidates for Baptism, taught this modern Lesson as Preparation, or had it requir'd of them as Examination, whether, in assenting to the baptismal Creed, they believed any Body but themselves? All Men feel the force of Testimony, and Tradition, and Authority; but only here and there a Person is capable, and that with a great deal of Application and Difficulty, of trying the Logick of all the necessary Consequences, from the Terms and Propositions of divine Revelation: now whatever God has made universally necessary for every Christian to assent to, must be supposed to be upon some common Argument, that all are equally capable of feeling the Force of; and not upon that which very few are capable of assenting upon. From which common Foundation of Assent, to the essential Truths of Christianity, whilst a Set of vile People endeavour to persuade Men, with their Cant of *Reason* and *Understanding*, and pre-  
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tence of letting them into the wonderful Secret of modish Believing, without dependence on any authoritative means of conveyance; what do they else than preach up Infidelity, enter *Caveats* against Christianity, and offer publick Reasons why Men ought not to be Believers of it? As the fatal Effect already shews. For what Sticklers for Anti-Christ ever brought so great a Dissolution of Principle upon a Nation, and made such a Shipwreck of Faith, as a confederate Crew of masque, or rather bare-fac'd Infidels, have lately made amongst us? By relaxing the Sense of Obligation to our Creeds, and letting Conscience loose from all Duty of Assent to their Christianity, but upon Terms and Schemes impracticable: its Fruits and Followers tell us what kind of Doctrine it is; for to the great Honour of their Cause and Principles, they see all the atheistical, the prophane, the immoral, and irreligious, to be their profest Profelytes; who, with great Zeal, extol the Performances, and toast the Healths of those brave Asserters of Mankinds natural Rights and irreligious Liberties; congratulate to each other their happy Deliverance from the Priestcraft of Piety, and the Imposition of Christianity; stand to their Characters, and are ready to prove to the Teeth of any Parson, from these learned Authors, that they play the Devil with a great deal of good *Reason* and *Understanding*; and that they cannot be more licentious than what they have Authority for from them. Under these Tutors, all the profligate Youth of the Kingdom are trained up as Disciples, in the Con-  
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tempt of all that is sacred; who are sure, by these faithful Directors, to have *B——r, Clark, Whiston, Rights of the Church, &c.* put into their Hands, as the Authors they are to perfect themselves in; who, if they give Proofs of their Proficiency in their study, by some early piece of Prophaneness, are marked as hopeful Lads. Has he pertly insulted a Clergyman; reviled the establish'd Church; shot some Fool's Bolt against St. *Athanasius* and his Creed; thrown out some brutish thing against the Doctrine of the Trinity, and Christ's Divinity; thrown a Glass in some Bodys Face, for proposing to drink Prosperity to the Church of *England*, and refusing *B——r, &c.* The next News that you hear of him is, that he is promised a Place, and sure of Preferment. What is all that ludicrous Treatment of, and the prophane Raillery at our Religion, and all its sacred Mysteries, that is grown the perpetual Matter of Conversation, but the effect of these Peoples Doctrines? What fills our Taverns, and Coffee-Rooms, with the trifling Disputings of raw Undertakers, against our establish'd Faith and Creeds, but the secret Instigation of these Setters on? What are the common and publick Blasphemies of Christ's Divinity, the Doctrine of the Trinity, and our Creeds, that daily must violate our Ears in Conversation, but the Echo of your *Scripture Doctrines*, and your *primitive Christianity, &c?* and the Language of such Authors more loudly and plainly pronounced. One would think, by the general Run of Discourse, that instead of a Christian Church,



Church, Irreligion were established, and disbelief of Christianity not only declared a Right, but enjoy'd as our Constitution. Plagues are a Blessing, and the very grossness of Poverty itself a Reformation, to what these People are leading us into, with their *Reason* and their *Understanding*; and have in part already. I do not know what occasion there may be for taking the State of the Nation's civil Credit into Consideration; but I am sure, if some Body do not shortly take our religious into consideration, it is growing very fast to be too late to think of retrieving it. For fear that *Reason* and *Understanding* should not be Pretences sufficient to propagate the good *Arian* and Infidel Cause on foot, Loyalty is also call'd to its Assistance; Orthodoxy is branded with Disaffection to the Government; drinking Prosperity to our Church a civil Offence; renouncing the *Nicene* and *Athanasian* Creed, and the Doctrine of the Trinity, is the avowed and declared Test of a true Whigg, to the Credit of that Name; and treating Christ as a *Pretender* to Divinity, a sure Note of a whiggish Cavalier. Every Man that believes his Creed, is treated like a *Jacobite*, by these new Loyalists; each shameless Fellow, and heathenish Liver, is took in as a serviceable Man by this prevailing Gang, that are driving us, our Religion, and all that is dear to us, before them. The Kingdom is hunted round to pick up such as have made themselves notorious for being of this libertine Kidney, to recommend to great Patrons, as proper Dignitaries; and all things seem fairly  
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tending to make good my Lord of *Bangor's* Doctrine, that *Christ's Kingdom is not of this World*, the most effectual way, by leaving him no Subjects on this Side of it.

And I pray God deliver our King, the Prince, and all the Royal Family, from the Influences and Preachings of such a Sett of Men, as under the Fiction of Loyalty, go the way to involve both him and his Kingdom, in Confusion and everlasting Destruction.

*F I N I S.*



1777  
I have the honor to acknowledge the receipt of your letter of the 10th inst. in relation to the above mentioned matter. I have the honor to inform you that the same has been forwarded to the proper authorities for their consideration. I am, Sir, very respectfully,  
Your obedient servant,  
J. M. Smith

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